



Damian Hinds
MP for East Hampshire

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For Immediate Release

Damian Hinds Backs Motion for Rural Broadband and Highlights East Hampshire Blackspots

Damian Hinds has backed a motion calling on the Government to facilitate better broadband access for rural communities. The motion recognises that rural communities and businesses are left isolated and undermined by the lack of proper internet access.

In East Hampshire district there are 17 postcodes without any internet coverage and huge areas which have internet access at less than a speed of 2mbs, severely limiting the websites and services which can be accessed.

These areas include parts of Froxfield, Bentworth, Upper Froyle, East Tisted, Kingsley and Buriton.

Through the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, £530 million of government finance is being made available under Broadband Delivery UK (BDUK) so that local authorities can help register demand and develop plans to stimulate the market.

Hampshire County Council have submitted a comprehensive plan in a bid to secure a share of the BDUK funds to support increased broadband access across the county. Decisions are expected by the end of May.

HCC has not based the bid on the council taxpayer subsidising any capital costs for the project.

Damian Hinds said

“One in five homes in East Hampshire have either no internet at all or access so slow they can do little more than send emails.

Broadband internet is an absolutely essential part of modern life, both for entrepreneurs and for families. I have met residents of villages in these black spots who have great local businesses, with plenty of demand, but their plans for growth are stymied because they cannot even run a website.

“Increasingly, the growth of small companies is driven by their visibility not just on the High Street but online. The internet is also an increasingly vital part of education. All our children need to have access to the internet as part of the learning process.

“Coverage in our major towns is comprehensive, but in our rural communities, like Buriton, Bentworth and Kingsley, there are still internet black spots.

“Proper access to the internet is not a luxury but a modern necessity and we need the investment to be made in our local infrastructure. In addition to making the case for Hampshire to ministers, I am seeking a meeting with BT to discuss what else we can do to deliver the needed improvements.”

-ENDS-

Notes to Editors

Although one million Hampshire residents in urban areas will get superfast broadband through market forces by 2015, large areas of Hampshire, including broadband 'not spots' adjoining urban areas, will be left with very slow internet access, less than 2 Megabits per second (Mbs), or even worse no broadband coverage at all. This equates to 112,500 people and 25,000 businesses in Hampshire.

The Government 'Broadband Strategy' was launched on 6 December 2010 by Jeremy Hunt, Secretary of State for Culture, Olympics, Media and Sport. This aims to ensure that Britain has the best broadband network in Europe by 2015.

The Government broadband strategy sets out the goal of delivering a fibre point (digital hub) in every community in the UK by the end of this Parliament, bringing superfast broadband within reach of communities urban and rural, and commits to ensuring that homes and businesses right across the UK are able to access a next generation broadband, even in the most remote rural areas.

Hampshire County Council, along with its partners, will be submitting a comprehensive bid for some of the £530 million of government finance that is being made available through Broadband Delivery UK (BDUK). To be successful, Hampshire County Council will need to demonstrate demand and show we have widespread support from individuals, communities, businesses, public services and politicians.

The bid must also set out how the local authority plans to stimulate the market by using its award winning public sector network as part of the infrastructure.